

# EARLY RACING

Unfortunately there are but few written records available covering the early days of racing in Duxbury Bay, but it seems fair to assume that not many years elapsed between the arrival of the Mayflower and the first brush between rival skippers. Perhaps the first urge for speed on the waters of the Bay was felt by some luckless clam-digging Pilgrim who had incurred the wrath of a band of redskins, but whatever the beginnings it is certain that Duxbury was one of the first places in America where organized small boat racing was recognized as a sport.

The earliest tangible evidence on hand at the moment is a "Dance Order" and an admission ticket to the "Dedication Ball" which was held in the new Club House on July 13, 1877, but there was informal racing on the Bay in 1875 and 1876, and it is believed that the first Duxbury Yacht Club was organized in the late summer of 1876. There are, it is thought, records still extant, which will some day come to light, but all records prior to 1895 cannot, at present, be found. The Club will appreciate any and all information which may be turned in to the Secretary covering the years prior to 1895.

It would seem from the evidence at hand that during the 20 years which elapsed between 1875 and 1895 yacht racing at Duxbury was carried on only with considerable effort and with varying fortunes. On the other hand, the keen and continuous interest in the sport during that period is unquestioned, and the only wonder is in the courage and persistency of the enthusiasts who refused to allow the fact that the Bay drains dry on each tide, to interfere with their fun. Furthermore, hours of labor, individual wealth and transportation facilities were then vastly different as compared with the present day.

The following letter from George Green, Esq., affords a most interesting glimpse into the days when yacht racing was in its infancy in our country.

"The beginning was in 1875 or 1876 when a few of the pleasure boats owned along the village shore and at Kingston and Plymouth and some lobstermen's spritsails from Cut River and Clark's Island got up some races. Of the pleasure boats I remember center-board Cats rigged with jibs, the "Pearl" from Standish Shore, owner Cook; the "Comet" owned by Nathaniel Thayer, Jr.; sloops "Mary B." owner Austin Hutchins; one from Plymouth, owner William Whitman; the "White Swallow," owner James Weston of Clark's Island and another from Kingston, owner Hy Keith. There were 2 classes of spritsails, 14 feet and 16 feet waterline. Of the 14 footers there was the "Mary Chilton," owner William Drew, and others owned by A. G. Collicott, Richard Winsor and John Winsor. Of the

16 footers there were the "Zephyr," owner William Wright; "Old Honesty," owner John Dawes of Kingston; "Nereid," owner G. A. Green; "Annie M." owner Captain Lewis Winsor, and the lobsterman "Saidy C." owner George Delano of Cut River, one owned by Barney Williamson of Cut River and one owned by William Ransom. Also the "Wanderer," owner Nathan Watson (later much talked of for skipper of one of the defenders of the America's Cup); the "Meteor," owner Mortimer Watson, and the "Little Charley" of Kingston, owner Ransom.

"The only real records I have found are the dance order and admission ticket for the Dedication Ball which occurred July 13, 1877, but I am sure there was a yacht club ball in 1876; probably the real incorporation of the Club was the fall or late summer of 1876. The first Commodore was Austin Hutchins, Vice-Commodore William J. Wright, other officers I have forgotten. A syndicate built the first Club House on the old wharf on land now owned by Mr. Maxwell at a cost of \$600. It was sold to your present Club for \$150 and moved up to your golf course. Hutchins was a good Commodore, but put things through regardless of expense, hired a tug boat for judges boat the first real regatta, Hub punch was served on board of her, as liquors were barred at the Club House. After that occasion 7

bottles of the said punch were brought ashore and put in a locker; at the next Club meeting it was discovered that only 3 of the bottles were left. William Wright volunteered to take them to his wine cellar for safety and they were put into his democrat wagon. He found only one bottle when he got home, he told me shortly before his death that he still had that bottle in his cellar with a label on it!!! There was a clam chowder served after the races and prizes costing \$25 given, free dances with hired orchestras were given frequently, all of which culminated in our being over \$300 in debt at the end of 3 years. When the late William Drew was elected Commodore, George Green, Vice-Commodore and Alfred Green, Treasurer, we ran it on much reduced expense, charged for dances, etc., and cleaned up the debt in 2 years. The Standish Shore people had become more numerous and interested in the Club and they reorganized it, built a new Club House in front of the Standish House, I think in 1883 or 1884, ran it a year or 2 when it also collapsed or was succeeded by your present Club. I am writing this entirely from memory, although I cannot vouch for its accuracy, I am pretty sure it comes very near to the actual facts."